



CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE  
EASTERN CONNECTICUT

# HOPES

ANNUAL REPORT  
**2020**

Dear Chamber members,

2020 was an extraordinary year of unforeseen challenges impacting all of us, and a year of tragic loss for many families with whom we grieve.

At the writing of this letter, it was a year ago that the World Health Organization declared a pandemic and life as we knew it began to rapidly change. Strong and resilient, eastern Connecticut responded to these unwelcome changes with cooperation, generosity, and innovation.

Our annual report tells the story of a year like no other. The report also demonstrates the Chamber’s commitment to our mission and our ability to fulfil our role in serving the community even in times of incredible disruption.

As 2020 commenced, we celebrated the expanding foundation of our region’s diverse business community and the substantial growth of industry across sectors. In 2020, these organizations created stability in the region’s economy and offered steady support to small businesses and the community through their role as Regional Benefactors for the Chamber. The Chamber and its members are deeply grateful for their investment in the programs, outreach, events, and resources that benefit businesses and nonprofits of all sizes. We truly could not have made progress this year without our long-standing Regional Benefactors and the new ones we welcomed this year.

We are especially proud of our Chamber members on the frontlines of the pandemic, helping the community and, in fact, the world, meet these challenges. Pfizer, with partner BioNTech, developed the first approved and most highly effective vaccine in the fight against COVID-19. Yale New Haven Health/L+M Hospital and Hartford HealthCare/Backus Hospital treated the ill and maintained the health of our communities. Genesys Diagnostics joined in the fight by processing thousands of tests. Our community banks responded to a massive influx of loan applications for the Paycheck Protection Program, coming to the aid of small businesses across the region. Utilities and communication companies made it possible for us to keep working and learning remotely, and The Day and The Bulletin kept us informed.

With the support of members and benefactors, the Chamber responded to the crisis by providing information and resources in a fast-evolving environment. Our staff shifted events to new topics and formats that addressed immediate needs and constraints. The Chamber connected members to news, services, and suppliers they needed, and we reached out directly to learn how we could help more.

Filling our role to convene and connect the region, the Chamber facilitated meetings with government officials on the local, state, and federal levels, the Connecticut Airport Authority, the CT Metro Chambers and the governor’s Reopen Connecticut Small Business Implementation Task Force - all with the goal of promoting and supporting eastern Connecticut interests.


The Chamber’s newly minted partnership with the Eastern Regional Tourism District preceded the coronavirus response by a few weeks. With deep roots in tourism through our extensive membership in the sector, the Chamber worked hard to support this hard-hit industry. Strong management of the financial resources provided by the state and thoughtful marketing plans will help the tourism industry recover quickly as travel resumes.

The pandemic caused unmeasurable suffering, economic devastation, and uncertainty to so many of our member businesses and families. Our efforts would not be possible without the dedicated support of our board members, trustees, and wonderful dedicated staff. We have also gained a deeper appreciation of our region’s ability to unite and rebound from adversity.

We are immensely proud of the support, the innovation, the generosity, and the perseverance demonstrated by our members, friends and colleagues in eastern Connecticut, and we look forward to playing a central role in our region’s recovery and our future.



Tony Sheridan, President and CEO



Stephen Coan, Ph.D., Board Chair

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MISSION

The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT brings together businesses, nonprofits, and communities to advance the economic vitality of the region and support member success.

**2020 began steeped in optimism.** Chamber President and CEO Tony Sheridan kicked off the New Year with a letter entitled “Entering the New Decade with Momentum.” New contracts at General Dynamics Electric Boat, growing opportunities in bioscience innovation with Pfizer leading the way, and the promise of investment in offshore wind energy indicated broad based economic growth with ripple effects throughout the economy. Our strong tourism industry was looking forward to increased marketing and investment on the state level. The strength of our community and a diverse economy proved invaluable as the country, and the world, came to a stop in March.

At the end of 2019, the Chamber adopted a new strategic plan focused on Collaboration, Inclusion, Innovation,

Support, and Sustainability. Drawn from the values that have governed the Chamber over its 110 years, these guiding principles laid the foundation of our response to a year we could not have anticipated. Working consistently toward the positive impact we could make, the Chamber staff faced a challenging year with hope.

2020 closed with a renewed sense of hope. Vaccinations began in December thanks to Pfizer. General Dynamics Electric Boat secured additional contracts, promising growth and high-quality jobs for our region. Offshore wind projects begin with the redevelopment of State Pier in 2021-22. Tourism and hospitality foresee a promising season as newly vaccinated travelers embrace the opportunity to enjoy gathering together again.

HOPE

WE HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO BE THANKFUL FOR IN THIS REGION.



As the impacts of COVID-19 unfolded in March, President and CEO Tony Sheridan’s leadership at the Chamber focused on our region’s history of coming together. Reminding us that our community had rallied to support each other after 9/11, to fight threats of a base closure, to take care of our military families during furlough, and through the Great Recession. Generosity, resilience, and community spirit shone through in eastern Connecticut throughout 2020. The Chamber Board of Directors, Foundation and staff embraced hope and endeavored in every way to support this caring community.

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>CHAIR</b> Stephen Coan <i>Mystic Aquarium</i>	<b>TREASURER</b> David Pugliese <i>Levine Insurance Group</i>	Charles Bunnell <i>The Mohegan Tribe</i>
<b>VICE CHAIR</b> Mary Ellen Jukoski <i>Three Rivers Community College</i>	<b>LEGAL COUNSEL</b> Jeffrey Godley <i>Brown Jacobsen, P.C.</i>	Eileen Duggan <i>Suisman Shapiro Attorneys-at-Law</i>
<b>VICE CHAIR</b> Paul Nugent <i>Pfizer, Inc.</i>	<b>PRESIDENT</b> Tony Sheridan <i>Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT</i>	Seema Mukherjee <i>Kumon</i>
<b>VICE CHAIR</b> Jennifer Granger <i>United Community &amp; Family Services</i>	John Antonino <i>Antonino Auto Group</i>	Liz Power <i>General Dynamics Electric Boat</i>
<b>PAST CHAIR</b> Michael Rauh <i>Chelsea Groton Bank</i>	Tai Au <i>Pink Basil, Spice Club, Thai Sawasdee, Samuri Noodle Bar + Grill</i>	Jean Swift <i>Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation</i>
		Norton Wheeler <i>Mystic River Building Company</i>
		Steve White <i>Mystic Seaport Museum</i>

STAFF

Tony Sheridan <i>President and CEO</i>	Stacy Herr <i>Program and Event Manager</i>
Megan Gilbert <i>Vice President</i>	Colleen Gresh <i>Communications Specialist</i>
Lori Thompson <i>Office Manager</i>	Tracy Tremblay <i>Business Services Representative</i>
Jane Davis <i>Membership Manager</i>	Emily Brannigan <i>Web and Graphic Designer</i>
Gary Rogers <i>Membership Manager</i>	Gina Mello <i>Administrative Assistant</i>
Courtney Assad <i>Director of Administrative Partnerships</i>	

NEW ROLES, NEW STAFF

Megan Gilbert accepted the position of Vice President in March. Her in-depth knowledge, gained through eight years with the Chamber, has been invaluable in the transition.

Courtney Assad was named Director of Administrative Partnerships, encompassing the new administrative role with the Eastern Regional Tourism District and existing relationships with other partners.

Stacy Herr joined the Chamber in October as the new Program and Event Manager, bringing extensive event planning experience with 18 years in the industry.

2020 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

John Antonino <i>Antonino Auto Group</i>	Thomas Blair Decker <i>General Dynamics Electric Boat</i>	John Lombardi <i>Lombardi Gravel &amp; Excavation, LLC</i>	Bob Ross <i>Connecticut Office of Military Affairs</i>
Amanda Arling <i>Whaler's Inn</i>	Mike DiFranco <i>General Dynamics Electric Boat</i>	Bruce MacDonald	Andy Russell <i>Hall Communications</i>
Angela Arnold	Maryam Elahi <i>Community Foundation of Eastern CT</i>	Alex Marku <i>A Beautiful Company General Contractors</i>	Neil Ryan <i>Wireless Zone</i>
Al Ayers <i>General Dynamics Electric Boat</i>	Laurie Finan <i>Century 21 Shutters &amp; Sails Real Estate</i>	Stanley Mickus <i>Cross Sound Ferry Services</i>	Annemarie Seifert <i>UConn, Avery Point</i>
Kia Baird <i>United Cerebral Palsy</i>	John Fuller <i>Full Power Radio, Inc.</i>	Maria Miranda <i>Miranda Creative, Inc.</i>	Bill Stanley <i>Retired, Yale New Haven Health Lawrence + Memorial Hospital</i>
Pete Battaglio <i>Hocon Gas</i>	Scott Gladstone <i>Wireless Zone</i>	Deborah Monahan <i>Thames Valley Council for Community Action</i>	Jim Wakim <i>Simon Konover</i>
Kim Binaco-Sylvia <i>Liberty Bank</i>	Patrick Green <i>Yale New Haven Health Lawrence + Memorial Hospital</i>	Matthew Morrissey <i>Ørsted</i>	Gail Weber <i>Minuteman Press</i>
Mark Brown <i>The Mohegan Tribe</i>	Robert J. Halloran, Jr. <i>Putnam Bank, a division of Centreville Bank</i>	Sue Murphy <i>Liberty Bank Foundation</i>	Jess R. Wenzel <i>Eastern CT Savings Bank</i>
Nancy Bulkeley <i>Dominion Energy</i>	Donna Handley <i>Hartford Healthcare Backus Hospital</i>	Lyndsey O'Brien <i>Charker Oak Federal Credit Union</i>	Dara Wicken <i>Navy Federal Credit Union</i>
Wendy Bury <i>Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition</i>	Kayla Hedman <i>SECWAC</i>	Anne Ogden <i>Halo Branded Solutions</i>	Lori Woll <i>Waterford Hotel Group, Inc.</i>
Rodney Butler <i>Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation</i>	Kevin Hennessy <i>Dominion Energy</i>	Brian Orenstein <i>Charter Oak Federal Credit Union</i>	Len Wolman <i>Waterford Hotel Group, Inc.</i>
Eric Callahan <i>Suisman Shapiro Attorneys-at-Law</i>	Shari Hewes <i>Holdridge Home and Garden Showplace</i>	Nisha Parekh <i>Hampton Inn Groton</i>	Mark Wolman <i>Waterford Hotel Group, Inc.</i>
Ken Capano <i>ShopRite</i>	Ornet Hines <i>Liberty Bank</i>	John Parker <i>The Parker Agency</i>	Mark Woods <i>People's United Bank</i>
Nicholas Caplanson <i>Dime Bank</i>	Susan Hurlburt <i>Eastern CT Association of Realtors</i>	David Preka <i>The Advanced Group</i>	Alyson Woznicki <i>Waterford High School</i>
Kristin Clarke <i>New London Main Street</i>	Tony Joyce <i>Chelsea Groton Bank</i>	David Quinn <i>Quinn and Hary Marketing/Regan Communications</i>	Donna Yother <i>SAVA Insurance Group, Inc.</i>
Angela Clay <i>Navy Federal Credit Union</i>	Jeffrey Klaus <i>Webster Bank</i>	Felix Reyes <i>City of New London</i>	Louis Ziegler <i>Mohegan Tribal Housing Authority</i>
Nancy Cowser <i>Southeastern CT Enterprise Region</i>	Eunice Lima <i>Charter Oak Federal Credit Union</i>	Kristen Roberts <i>Comcast</i>	
Anthony Cronin <i>Charter Oak Federal Credit Union</i>		Heather Roberts <i>Diamond Team at Norcom Mortgage</i>	
Peter Davis <i>Renaissance City Development Association (RCDA)</i>		Karen Roman <i>Dime Bank</i>	



# RESPOND

The Chamber staff focused early efforts on member outreach and essential information. Touching base with our members through hundreds of calls, emails and texts, we listened to what they needed. Through the generosity of the Pfizer Foundation and Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation, we supported struggling businesses and new members with supplemental grants for membership. The connection to the Chamber network and services offered peace of mind when businesses and organizations needed us most.



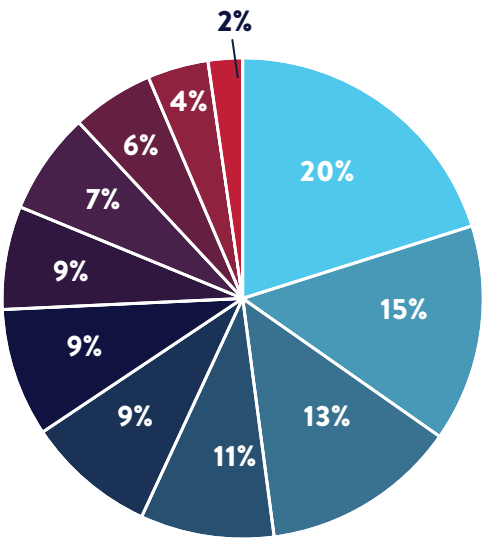
Δ Partnering across the region with organizations and business owners, the Chamber helped launch and promote Let's Go 860, encouraging residents to shop, dine, and enjoy local venues safely.



**2020 NEW MEMBER**  
**SWEET HILL FARM AND RUSTIC BOUTIQUE CATERING AND EVENTS**  
Clearly fans of collaboration in the marriage of their two businesses, Rustic Boutique is the exclusive caterer and plays a management role at Sweet Hill Farms' country chic wedding venue in Gales Ferry. With events limited to intimate gatherings, Rustic Boutique's grab-and-go meals became even more of a focus for the catering company. The eclectic mix of local products, grocery, and gift items from CT artists, farms, and small businesses represents the power of community the Chamber is excited to promote.

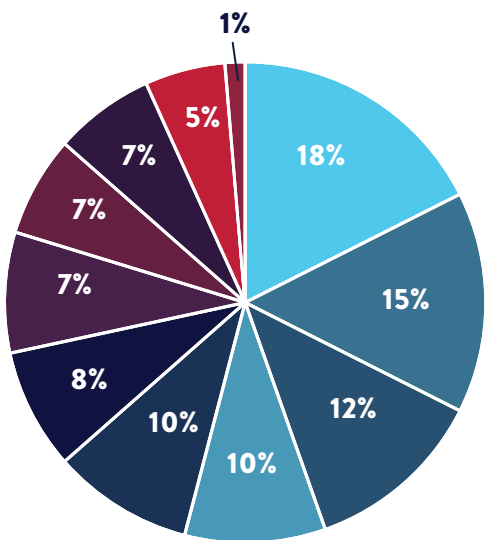
“FOCUSED ON OUR VISION OF SUPERB QUALITY AND ATTAINABLE PRICING, IT'S MUSIC TO OUR EARS WHEN CUSTOMERS SAY, 'I CAN'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING IS SO REASONABLE.' WORKING WITH THE CHAMBER HAS HELPED US SHARE THAT VISION WITH THE WHOLE REGION.”

Charlene Rand, Rustic Boutique Catering & Events, Founder, Catering & Design



MEMBERSHIP BY REGION

- 20% Groton/Mystic/Stonington
- 15% New London
- 13% Greater Norwich
- 11% Tolland County/Fairfield County/Litchfield County/Middlesex County/New Haven County
- 9% East Lyme/Old Lyme/Lyme
- 9% Waterford
- 9% Ledyard/Mashantucket/North Stonington
- 7% Hartford County
- 6% Colchester/Salem/Montville
- 4% Windham County
- 2% Out of State



NEW MEMBERS BY REGION

- 18% Groton/Mystic/Stonington
- 15% Greater Norwich
- 12% East Lyme/Old Lyme/Lyme
- 10% New London
- 10% Waterford
- 8% Ledyard/Mashantucket/North Stonington
- 7% Tolland County/Fairfield County/Litchfield County/Middlesex County/New Haven County
- 7% Colchester/Salem/Montville
- 7% Hartford County
- 5% Out of State
- 1% Windham County

73 NEW MEMBERS

NEW REGIONAL BENEFACTORS

The Chamber's Regional Benefactors contribute over and above the standard membership dues structure to support the programs and events produced annually for the small business and nonprofit community. We are fortunate that our region's business leaders are committed to responsible economic growth and job creation in eastern CT, and support our efforts to provide the region with an essential voice in Hartford and beyond.





# INFORM

Rapidly shifting guidance and emerging relief funds from federal and state entities were hallmarks of the early days of the pandemic. The Chamber collected, sorted, and shared the most pertinent information with the business and nonprofit community, and we offered direct access to government officials through live webinars. Participants had the chance to ask decision makers important questions relevant to their concerns.

Zoom became the word of the year—a strange name for a platform where no one is actually going anywhere. From remote desks at home, the region did travel virtually to meetings and webinars where they received essential information and creative approaches to adapt to the “new normal.”

## MEMBER TO MEMBER WEBINARS

At its heart, the Chamber is about its members. Our job is to bring members together to grow community and the economy. Sharing their specialized knowledge, members provided insights on how to manage business through the pandemic. Maria Miranda of Miranda Creative recognized the need to pivot early on and offered our first coronavirus targeted webinar, “Messaging during a Market Disruption.” Bridget Brown of StoryMatters offered a workshop on “Improv for Better Communication” and Richard Hews of Pathways of Growth helped businesses create positive strategies for “Accountability in a Remote-Work Setting.” Other webinars through the year included federal funding relief led by loan officers at our community banks, trainings, and creative approaches to the new way of doing business.

## ROUNDTABLES HELP MEMBERS SHARE AND STRATEGIZE

Convening business owners by industry, the Chamber facilitated roundtable discussions for restaurants, real estate professionals, and event and hospitality venues. Food service faced some of the most difficult challenges as they navigated safety and service protocols as well as supply chain disruptions. Providing the chance to discuss reopening, safe operation, and industry needs moving forward was an important function for the Chamber.



## TOP ATTENDED WEBINARS

1. CT Department of Labor Updates and FAQs
2. Open for Business - Preparing a Successful Reopening Strategy, Sessions 1, 2, and 3
3. Funding and Relief Programs with SBDC and Local Lenders
4. Pivot - Messaging during a Market Disruption
5. Navigating the Paycheck Protection Program

## KEY SPEAKERS

- Senator **Richard Blumenthal**
- Congressman **Joe Courtney**
- Governor **Ned Lamont**
- **David Lehman**, Commissioner, DECD
- **Katie Dykes**, Commissioner, DEEP
- **Glendowlyn Thames**, Deputy Commissioner, DECD
- **Peter Denious**, AdvanceCT

## TOWN HALLS

The Chamber’s annual forums with local elected officials always provide important updates with town leaders, but in 2020 details about the COVID-19 response were more vital than ever. The Chamber hosted Town Hall Updates with City of Groton, Town of Groton, New London, East Lyme and Waterford, as well as a forum with State Senators from our region.

## DEBATES

Partnering with The League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut, the Chamber hosted debates for candidates running for State House seats in the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, 38<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, and 42<sup>nd</sup> Districts. Taking the debates online via our Facebook page, we connected voters with the candidates when large, in-person events were not possible.



▲ Leadership Class of 2020 presents a \$5,000 check to The Light House during their ribbon cutting in 2019.

## LEADERSHIP EASTERN CT

Leadership Eastern Connecticut is a two-year program that prepares future community leaders for positions of responsibility by acquainting them with significant community processes and issues that affect businesses and the public. Over 600 business leaders have completed the course since its inception in 1987. The Class of 2020 completed their second year in the program and celebrated their graduation in one of the Chamber’s few in-person events. The Spa at Norwich Inn facilitated a safe, outdoor event where keynote speaker Ulysses Hammond stressed the value of flexibility, vision, and creativity as a leader in a crisis.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

For their capstone community service project in 2019, Leadership Eastern Connecticut Class of 2020 raised more than \$11,000 in cash and in-kind donations to renovate and improve the outdoor area of the Community Campus of The Light House in New London. The project included improvements to the patio, an awning, outdoor furniture, and landscaping. Funds raised in excess of project costs were donated to The Light House.

**2019-2020 Program Sponsors:** Atlantic Broadband, CorePlus Credit Union, CT Hospital Association, Three Rivers Community College



PIVOT

Home Show, Annual Meeting, Citizen of the Year—events we plan for all year were days or weeks away when the shutdown called for an immediate pivot. These events, and many others, were postponed or reimagined for a year without social gatherings. Sponsors remained dedicated to the Chamber’s mission and supported this shift from traditional events. Attendees generously paid for tickets to bolster the Chamber’s ongoing work in the community.



▲Michael Rauh congratulates 2019 Citizen of the Year Rodney Butler.

▼YPs celebrated Earth Day with a regional cleanup.

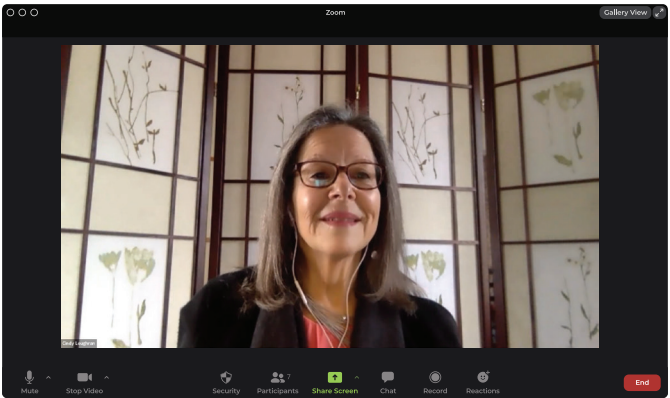


EASTERN CT’S CITIZEN OF THE YEAR: MICHAEL RAUH

In February, the Chamber announced Michael Rauh, President/CEO of Chelsea Groton Bank, would be honored. Awarded annually for outstanding contributions on behalf of the civic and business community, the Citizen of the Year for 2020 would further demonstrate his mettle, leading the bank through the intense Paycheck Protection Program where they processed 4.5 years’ worth of small business loans in eight weeks. Chelsea Groton Bank and its Foundation gave a record \$1 million to local nonprofits in 2020. Through it all Rauh focused on supporting bank staff and clients with safety and service as primary goals.

Celebrating 10 years at the helm of Chelsea Groton Bank, Rauh has dedicated himself to the local community throughout his tenure. He has led and served on many Boards, including the Chamber, Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, The Yale New Haven Health System, the Norwich Free Academy Foundation, and the Norwich Community Development Corporation. Serving in another crucial sector, Rauh was L+M Healthcare’s Board Chair through most of 2020.

The Chamber and the eastern CT community plan to honor Michael Rauh with a fitting celebration of his dedicated service in 2021.



▲Guest speaker Cindy Loughran led attendees through a well deserved mindfulness practice virtually.

SOCIAL SERVICE RECOGNITION IN A CHALLENGING YEAR

Each year, the Chamber holds a breakfast honoring nonprofit organizations’ essential contributions to the community. In 2020, these groups met unprecedented need when even basic ways of operating were entirely upended. In December, the Chamber invited social service providers to take a breath—quite literally—gathering virtually with Cindy Loughran, CPC, speaking on using mindfulness to manage stress and build resilience. The Chamber wishes to express our deep appreciation for the work done by frontline heroes.

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

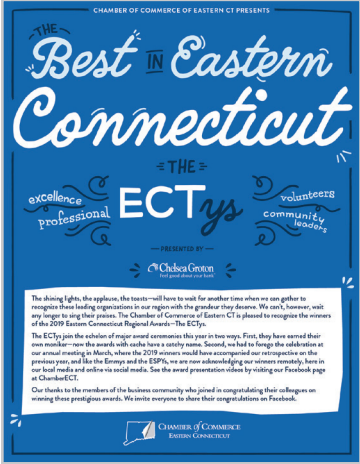
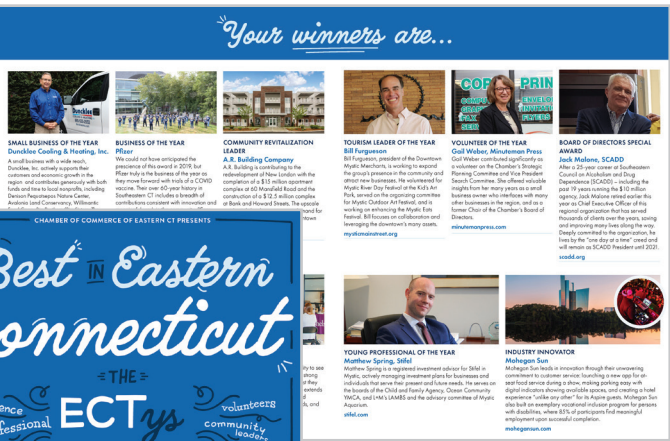
Helen Keller



THE ECTYS

Introducing a catchy new name this year, the Chamber unexpectedly celebrated the Eastern CT Regional Chamber Awards in a new way, too. Traditionally given at the Chamber’s Annual Meeting, the awards became the center of a digital and media campaign sponsored by Chelsea Groton Bank, Bouvier Insurance, Pat Munger Construction, LJ Shoreline Realty, Stifel, and Child and Family Agency of Southeastern CT. Videos on Facebook recognized each winner in a weeklong campaign, captured in print for an insert in The Day and a special edition of the Chamber’s Voice newsletter. The success of bringing these winners more directly into the public eye may lead to similar campaigns in the future.

- Business of the Year: **Pfizer**
- Small Business of the Year: **Dunklee Cooling & Heating**
- Community Revitalization Leader: **A.R. Building Company**
- Nonprofit of the Year: **Public Library of New London**
- Best Place to Work: **Chelsea Groton Bank**
- Industry Innovator: **Mohegan Sun**
- Tourism Leader of the Year: **Bill Furgueson, Downtown Mystic Merchants Association**
- Young Professional of the Year: **Matthew Spring, Stifel**
- Volunteer of the Year: **Gail Weber, Minuteman Press**



Congratulations!

▲The ECTys award winners were celebrated with an insert in The Day

▲YPs enjoy a takeout tailgate at Pink Basil in Mystic.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS OF EASTERN CT

The Young Professionals of Eastern CT continued their social and professional networking while observing social distancing. Outdoor events included hikes, dinner on the patio of Buon Appetito, and tailgating with dinner from Pink Basil. Community service went virtual with YPs sharing photos of their own Earth Day cleanup. Program sponsors Charter Oak Federal Credit Union and Keith Turner - Homestead Funding continued their support as the program repositioned its offerings in 2020.



# MARKETING REINVENT

Keeping connected—with information, opportunity, and each other—relied more heavily than ever on digital platforms. The Chamber built a COVID-19 resource webpage with reliable information and links to key governmental agencies. New legislation, funding opportunities, and reopening guidelines continue to be shared in timely emails, social media posts, and blogs.

As businesses reopened in May, the Chamber created a new page of resources linking to needed products and services provided by our members. The list included construction companies, rentals, cleaning services, and PPE suppliers. Chamber President and CEO Tony Sheridan served on the State's Reopen Connecticut Small Business Implementation Task Force in a statewide effort to list essential reopening resources.

In sectors hit particularly hard—hospitality, tourism, arts, and culture—blogs, social media, and member news promoted shopping local, dining in or taking out, and purchasing gift certificates or memberships to keep businesses and venues afloat while operating at limited capacity. The Chamber reached out to members in specific sectors to highlight services adapted to the new environment, such as restaurants, fitness centers, tech providers, retail stores, educational opportunities, virtual arts events, and outdoor entertainment.

Overnight, the restaurant industry shifted into a new, uncharted business model. As venues developed creative ways to deliver for customers, the Chamber promoted industry innovators.

Chapter One in Mystic passed iconic cocktails and delicious dinners through their Open Window service. Filomena's touchless menu stood four feet tall and was wheeled through a parking lot transformed into an outdoor dining and live music hotspot.

## RESTAURANT RESILIENCE

## TOP 10 BLOGS

1. Grants and Loans for Small Businesses and Nonprofits
2. The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT Celebrates 110th Anniversary and Annual Meeting with Regional Awards
3. Restaurants for Take Out, Curbside, or Delivery
4. Put Your Business on the Map (Let's Go 860)
5. Governor Lamont Releases Rules for Businesses Under First Phase of Connecticut's Reopening Plans Amid COVID-19
6. Resources for Small Business Employers and Workers
7. Dining Al Fresco, Eating Out Today
8. Federal Government Passes \$2 Trillion Relief Package Over \$350 Billion for Small Business Assistance
9. Time's Up Act Brings New Requirements for Training on Sexual Harassment Prevention
10. Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT Announces Michael Rauh as Citizen of the Year

Flanders Fish Market became an essentials market as well, providing hard-to-get items like milk and eggs in the early days of the pandemic. Outdoor heaters extended their season on the deck for safe family gatherings at Thanksgiving.

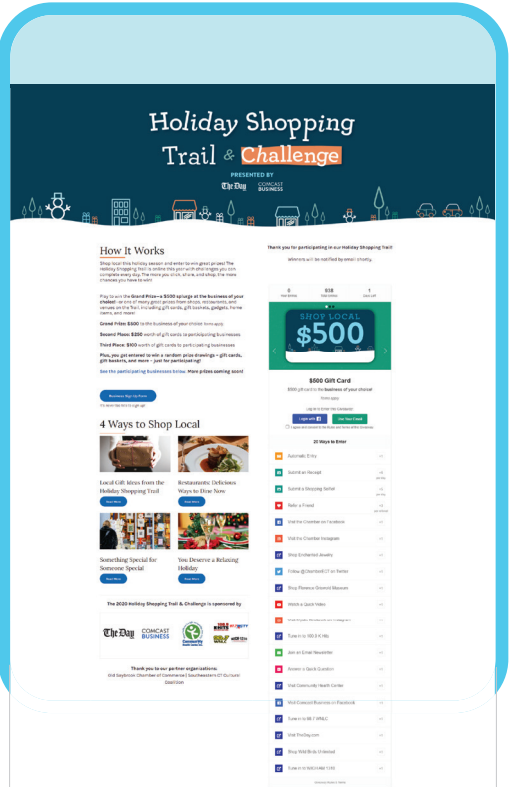
Gourmet Galley kept catering staff busy in between intimate weddings by preparing dinners to go, and the business opened a flagship store, GG AT HOME, in November.

## HOLIDAY SHOPPING TRAIL'S SUCCESSFUL PIVOT

Traveling the trail—discovering eastern CT's downtowns and businesses—was the concept that launched the Chamber's annual shop local promotion three years ago. In 2020, customers felt more inclined to shop from home, and the Holiday Shopping Trail responded by moving online. Getting local businesses in front of stay-at-home shoppers helped sales in a tough season.

The website that replaced printed passports provided advantages that make the platform a great choice going forward. Going digital increased measurable participation 300% with active users engaging multiple times, resulting in over 800 entries. The entry structure incentivized purchases, social media connections, in-person shopping, and following links to online stores and videos. The far-reaching campaign achieved over 20,000 impressions on social media. Collected data includes an email list, perfect for future shop local promotions and a benefit for participating stores.

The 2020 Holiday Shopping Trail received generous support from presenting sponsors Comcast and The Day, and supporting sponsors Community Health Centers, Inc., and Hall Communications



## RIBBON CUTTINGS GO "LIVE"

Every tradition was reinvented in 2020 including the Chamber's customary grand opening ceremonies. Social distancing and gathering size restrictions led to sharing the celebrations online through Facebook Live. With views in the thousands and the chance to engage a wider audience, going live is here to stay.

▼ Tony Sheridan celebrates Better Together CT ribbon cutting with Dr. Stefana Pecher.



▲ Title IX by Bank Square Books' grand opening was streamed live on the Chamber's Facebook page with 1.1K views.



# PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT

## DOMINION ENERGY GRANT

This initiative, funded through Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation, identifies minority-owned businesses that can benefit from Chamber membership.

- Assured Quality Homecare, LLC
- Exemplify to Edify, LLC
- Golden Egg Concepts
- Long River Farm
- Main Avent Sports & Apparel
- Operation Fresh Start
- Rise Nutrition
- Rustic Boutique Catering and Events
- Sweet Hill Farm
- The Tin Peddler
- Work Vessels for Veterans

## PFIZER FOUNDATION

Pfizer has long been an essential Chamber partner and generous corporate citizen. As pandemic restrictions continued to curtail many business operations, the Pfizer Foundation provided a donation to help us support the small business and nonprofit community, as well as bolster our operations in the face of a difficult economic environment.

- Defrayed the cost to **allow the Chamber to distribute 6,000 complimentary masks** and hand sanitizer during PPE shortage
- **Provided financial support for membership dues and other services for many member businesses** facing Covid-driven financial difficulties
- **Supported free registration for hundreds of attendees for Chamber webinars** on PPP/EIDL, CARES Act, FMLA, reopening, marketing, and other timely topics
- **Supported technology and software** to provide new or revamped services in a suddenly “socially-distanced” world

## HEALTHCARE

In 2020, access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare became top-of-mind across the region and country. The Chamber, in partnership with Morin Associates LLC and Lifestyle Health Plans, was proud to grow participation in its strategic group health insurance solution by 33%. Employers can manage healthcare costs while providing valuable benefits to employees through this program, the only one of its kind in New London county.

**\$438,005**  
SAVED BY MEMBERS  
AS OF DECEMBER 2020

**157**  
EMPLOYEES ENROLLED

## MEMBER DISCOUNTS

Adding value to Chamber membership, discount programs were significantly expanded in 2020. Chamber members can now access special savings for their business from UPS, Constant Contact, Lenovo, Avis and Budget. Chamber member employees enjoy access to these benefits as well as programs with Foxwoods Resort Casino, prescription drug cards, and special offers from other members such as the Spa at Norwich Inn, Mystic Seaport Museum, and Lathrop Vending. Members also took advantage of posting new and updated military discounts to the Chamber's outlets, sharing their appreciation for the local men and women who serve our country.

## CT AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Chamber President and CEO Tony Sheridan continued his service as chairman of the CT Airport Authority. Bradley International Airport faced serious challenges this year beginning with adopting safety protocols and continuing with a severe decline in travel of 72% year over year. The airport facilitated COVID-19 testing for passengers and CT residents on-site and in a drive-through center.

## METRO CHAMBERS

The Metro Chamber group ramped up their meeting schedule to respond to the pandemic, meeting weekly in the early months and now bi-weekly as they continue to support recovery efforts. In 2020 Chamber President and CEO Tony Sheridan continued his service as chair.

### Metro Chamber Members:

- Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut
- Waterbury Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- MetroHartford Alliance/Hartford Chamber of Commerce
- Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce
- Bridgeport Regional Business Council
- Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce

▼ Office Manager, Lori Thompson handed out complimentary PPE to businesses in need, like Duncklee Cooling and Heating, outside the Chamber's office.





# PARTNERSHIPS COLLABORATE



The Chamber engages in economic development initiatives with partners around the region and statewide.

## A NEW PARTNERSHIP EASTERN REGIONAL TOURISM DISTRICT

In March 2020, the Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD) selected the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT in collaboration with the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce to act as its nonprofit administrative partner. The ERTD Board of Directors, representing the district's 41 towns, selected the Chambers based on their current work in the tourism industry, established connections, and operational abilities.

"The two Chambers coming together under one proposal offered a very strong partnership with people who are already supporting tourism and local businesses in the region," said Jim Bellano of Windham, chair, ERTD Board of Directors. "While we did not see the current crisis coming when we made the selection at the beginning of March, we are pleased that these two organizations have strong records and experience working with the tourism industry."

ERTD and the Chambers took the opportunity to build structures that would facilitate a better recovery in the region as the crisis subsided. Innovative approaches included a very successful grant program for marketing. A match of public and private dollars increased impact, encouraged collaboration, and gave industry partners and regional attractions a voice in creating effective tourism promotion.



▲ With support from the Chamber, ERTD continues to promote local attractions such as the New London Ledge Lighthouse.



SCORE provides free consultations to small businesses or those interested in starting a business. The Chamber provides meeting space for SCORE's weekly office hours and promotes their workshops. After March 2020, meetings were held virtually.



SECWAC aims to foster an understanding of issues of foreign policy and international affairs. The Chamber provides administrative support and promotion for SECWAC.



The Chamber and the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Eastern CT co-present Eastern CT's Premier Home Show, connecting residents with local contractors. The Chamber also provides administrative support and office space.



The Chamber and EWIB have a collaborative partnership with the shared goal of growing eastern CT's economy through workforce-related programs. Through the partnership, a Chamber staff member works out of the American Job Centers' Montville office.



The Chamber partners with CT SBDC in eastern CT to offer professional, confidential, and expert business advice for business owners to overcome challenges and reach their goals. SBDC has free resources, tools, and online trainings to offer business help along the way.



Through its partnership with Thames River Innovation Place, funded by CTNext, the Chamber has created and administered new programs such as Community Concierge (a regional welcome program for new employees), CHAT Eastern Region (an online tourism training program for eastern CT that compliments the CT Hospitality Awareness Program established by the CT Tourism Coalition); and an innovation center in downtown New London is in the planning stages.



The Chamber partners with the Community Foundation of Eastern CT for a regional Nonprofit Conference, bringing in noted speakers. Nearly 100 nonprofit staff participate in this annual event. While not held in 2020, the conference is planned for 2021.



The partnership between the Chamber and the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition increases collaborative efforts to better serve the organizations in our region.



The Southeastern CT Enterprise Region (seCTer) is the designated private, non-profit economic development organization providing a broad range of services and resources to stimulate and support economic development and diversification within the region.



The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT is proud to partner with the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce on regional tourism marketing efforts and events and programs that benefit our shared membership.



# GIVE

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

\$7,500  
DISTRIBUTED

Recipients are determined based on need, academic standing, community service, and their desire to work and live in eastern CT.

**Angie Correa**  
Science and Technology Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut '20  
University of Saint Joseph

**Cassandra Cannon**  
Science and Technology Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut '20  
Salve Regina University

**Hope Sowle**  
Stonington High School '20  
Carnegie Mellon University

**Kali Whitford**  
Norwich Free Academy '20  
Virginia Tech

**Monn Pierre**  
Norwich Free Academy '20  
Three Rivers Community College

**Sara Beth Bouchard**  
Science and Technology Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut '20  
Wesleyan University

2020 FOUNDATION GRANT RECIPIENTS

\$94,380  
DISTRIBUTED

Tommy Toy Fund	\$17,500
Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board	\$5,000
St. Vincent de Paul Place, Norwich, Inc.	\$5,000
United Way of Southeastern Connecticut	\$5,000
Always Home, Inc.	\$3,500
Madonna Place, Inc.	\$3,500
Safe Futures, Inc.	\$3,000
Sea Research Foundation	\$3,000
Shiloh Development Corporation	\$3,000
High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, Inc.	\$2,500
Higher Edge, Inc.	\$2,500
New England Science & Sailing	\$2,500
Riverfront Children's Center	\$2,500
United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern CT	\$2,500
Waterford Country School	\$2,500
United Community and Family Services, Inc	\$2,335
Thames River Community Service	\$2,200
City of Norwich	\$2,000
New London Homeless Hospitality Center	\$2,000
Pregnancy Support Center, Inc.	\$2,000
Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc.	\$2,000
The Lighthouse Voc-Ed Center	\$2,000
FRESH New London	\$1,700
Catholic Charities Diocese of Norwich, Inc.	\$1,500
Norwich Community Backpack Program	\$1,500
Stonington Historical Society	\$1,200
Eastern CT Community Gardens Association	\$1,045
Channel 3 Kids Camp	\$1,000
Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra	\$1,000
Hygienic Art Inc.	\$1,000
Immigration Advocacy & Support Center	\$1,000
Norwich Historical Society	\$1,000
Norwich Rotary Foundation	\$1,000
S.T.E.P.S., Inc.	\$1,000
The Arc Eastern Connecticut	\$1,000
Children's Museum of SECT	\$900
Montville Little League	\$500

ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

\$15,500  
DONATED

Responding to the community in 2020 meant addressing needs that arose quickly from unemployment, school closings, and reduced access to services. The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut Foundation working with generous business executives, directed an additional \$15,500 to local food centers in April.

EVERY MONTH IS A HOLIDAY

Due to the pandemic, one of the Foundation’s most precious year-end traditions, the Holiday Gala, could not occur. However, the heart and the spirit of the Gala continue; despite the lack of our typical lively event, dedicated sponsors and donors are still stepping up to ensure that at-risk children and families are supported when it matters most. Miranda Creative and Eighty Six Media helped to conceptualize and launch this unique campaign.



▲ People's United Bank staff celebrate in their Every Month is a Holiday Video

\$117,380

Donated and distributed to deserving individuals and organizations in Eastern CT

“ THIS CHARITABLE DONATION WILL ALLOW US TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE NUTRITIOUS FOOD AND OTHER CRITICAL SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN NEED IN OUR COMMUNITY.

JILLIAN CORBIN

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PLACE

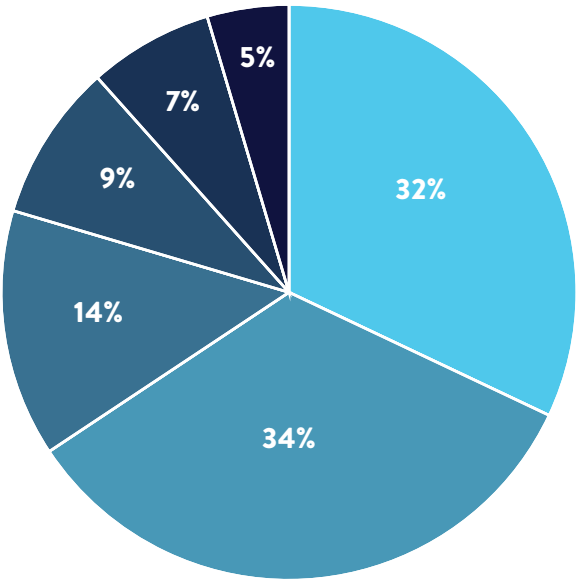
Increased demand for meals and basic needs due to the coronavirus put pressure on local food pantry and soup kitchen St. Vincent de Paul Place. Creatively delivering meals and services under pandemic protocols, St. Vincent de Paul Place continued to serve the community with the help of the community, supported by the Chamber Foundation, Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Center, local grocery stores, farms, organizations, and individuals. Dime Bank extended their support of St. Vincent de Paul Place this year to include Chamber membership.

FINANCIALS

The first two months of 2020 started strong, but with the news of COVID-19 restrictions in March, we faced an economic downturn, canceled events with lost sponsorships, and dropped memberships. Preparing for the worst, the Chamber made the extremely difficult decision to furlough half of its staff in hopes of ensuring fiscal sustainability. We experienced significant losses in membership and event revenues, but our conservative

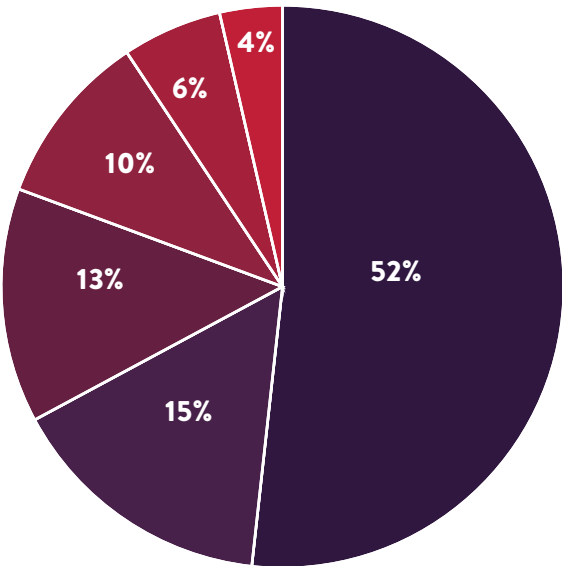
approach was bolstered by the continued support of our Regional Benefactors, state support, and a generous gift from The Pfizer Foundation. Staff were returned from furlough as soon as possible, and although uncertainty continued as we neared the end of 2020, the Chamber was able to achieve a healthy financial position. We remain dedicated to supporting the community in its post-COVID recovery.

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Assets	\$664,589	\$442,414	\$507,474	\$585,657	\$552,057
Liabilities	\$272,797	\$160,015	\$212,910	\$221,409	\$214,123
Equity	\$391,792	\$282,398	\$294,564	\$364,248	\$337,935
Current Ratio	2:1	3:1	2:1	2:1	2:1



REVENUE:

Regional Benefactors	\$313,750
Membership Dues	\$329,535
Grants	\$136,221
Programs & Events	\$86,434
Partnerships	\$68,6222
Other	\$44,949
	<b>\$979,511</b>



EXPENSES:

Operations	\$447,157
Grants	\$133,129
Building & Technology	\$116,579
Marketing/Membership (Non-Grant)	\$86,603
Programs & Events	\$49,576
Professional Fees, Admin. Fees	\$31,105
	<b>\$864,149</b>

Our community, our country, and our world grieve together as we remember those we have lost in 2020.



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR REGIONAL BENEFACTORS WHO CONTRIBUTE  
SIGNIFICANTLY TO PROGRAMS IN SUPPORT OF THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

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